

RESOLUTON NO. 2

SYNOPSIS

Resolution No. 2 from the Franklin Township Board of Education (Warren County) proposes new policy language supporting the belief that the State should modify the criteria for the school nurse (non-instructional) endorsement to eliminate the requirements of holding a bachelor's degree and completing a New Jersey Department of Education ("NJDOE") approved college curriculum for the preparation of school nurses, with a minimum of 15 semester hour credits. In lieu of the 15 semester hour credits in an NJDOE approved college curriculum, Franklin Township proposes requiring a candidate to complete three classes related to school specific operations within the first eighteen months of beginning employment in a school district.

BACKGROUND

In New Jersey, a board of education is required to employ at least one certified school nurse. *See N.J.S.A. 18A:40-1; N.J.A.C. 6A:16-2.3(b).*

Certified School Nurses

A "certified school nurse" is defined as "a person who holds a current license as a registered professional nurse from the State Board of Nursing **and** an educational services certificate, school nurse or school nurse/non-instructional endorsement from the NJDOE." N.J.A.C. 6A:16-1.3.

The NJDOE's current requirements for the school nurse/non-instructional endorsement are:

- New Jersey registered professional nurse license
- Bachelor's Degree
- Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation and Automated External Defibrillators certification
- Training in airway management and the use of nebulizers
- Completion of an NJDOE-approved program for school nurses with 15 semester-hour credits that include the following topics:
 - 6 credits in school nursing
 - Health assessment
 - Special education
 - Public health
 - Guidance and counseling
 - School Law
- 20 hours of professional development on the following topics:
 - Human growth and development
 - Substance abuse and dependency
 - Human and intercultural relations

See N.J.A.C. 6A:14-4.4; N.J.S.A. 18A:40-3.8.

An “emergency certificate” is available for the school nurse/non-instructional endorsement, but the issuance of this certificate requires approval by the Executive County Superintendent and expires on July 31st of every school year, regardless of when it was issued. See N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-5.12. To be eligible for an “emergency certificate,” the requirements are the same as the school nurse/non-instructional endorsement, with the exception of completing the 15 semester-hour credits in an NJDOE-approved program and the professional development hours. Instead, the person must only provide evidence of study in public health nursing and child/adolescent growth and development. *See* N.J.A.C. 6A:14-4.4(e).

Through its regulations regarding health services personnel, the NJDOE provides a certified school nurse with authority to do the following:

- Carry out written orders of the medical home and standing orders of the school physician;
- Conduct health screenings (height, weight, blood pressure, hearing, vision, and scoliosis);
- Monitor vital signs and general health status for emergent issues for students suspected of being under the influence of alcohol/controlled dangerous substances;
- Maintain student health records;
- Recommend students who shall not be admitted to or retained in the school building due to the lack of immunization evidence;
- Annually review student’s immunization records;
- Recommend the exclusion of students who show evidence of communicable disease;
- Direct and supervise the emergency administration of epinephrine and glucagon, and training staff to serve as delegates;
- Administer asthma medication;
- Direct and supervise the health services activities of any staff member who has an assigned nursing task;
- Review health and medical information regarding a student for child study team meetings;
- Annually write and update students’ individualized health care plans and emergency health care plans;
- Annually revise and update any written health care provisions required under Section 504;
- Assist in the development of and implementation of healthcare procedures for students in the event of an emergency;
- Instruct teachers on communicable disease and other health concerns; and
- Review health history questionnaires and share with the athletic trainer.

See N.J.A.C. 6A:16-2.3(b)3.

Noncertified Nurses

A “noncertified nurse” is defined as a person “who holds a current license as a professional nurse from the State Board of Nursing and is employed by a district board of education or nonpublic school, and who is not certified as a school nurse by the NJDOE.” N.J.A.C. 6A:16-1.3. In other

words, a “noncertified nurse” is a registered nurse (“RN”) who works in a school district, absent the requirements of the noninstructional endorsement.

In New Jersey, an RN license requires the following:

- Diploma from a 4-year high school
- Completion of a course of professional nursing study in an accredited school of professional nursing
- Passing score on a written examination for the license

See N.J.S.A. 45:11-26.

In comparing the eligibility requirements for a school nurse/non-instructional endorsement vs. an RN license, the main difference is the completion of nursing studies through a program that results in a bachelor’s degree (certified school nurse) vs. the completion of nursing studies through a program that results in an associate’s degree (RN).

A school district is authorized to “supplement the services provided by the certified school nurse with noncertified nurses, provided that the noncertified nurse is assigned to the same school building or school complex as the certified school nurse.” *N.J.S.A. 18A:40-3.3.* The New Jersey Appellate Division has confirmed that the certified school nurse is not required to be present at all times when a noncertified nurse is providing services. *See Ramsey Teachers Association v. Board of Education of Ramsey*, 382 N.J. Super. 241 (January 2006).

The noncertified nurse/RN is also limited to providing services only as permitted under the license issued by the State Board of Nursing. *See N.J.A.C. 6A:16-2.3(c)2.* The State Board of Nursing defines these services as “diagnosing and treating human responses to actual or potential physical and emotional health problems, through such services as:”

- Casefinding;
- Health teaching;
- Health counseling;
- Provision of care supportive to or restorative of life and well-being;
- Executing medical regimens as prescribed by a licensed physician; and
- Identifying and discriminating between physical and psychosocial signs and symptoms.

See N.J.S.A. 45:11-23.

Current Requirement of Advanced Schooling for Certified School Nurses

As discussed above, in New Jersey, a candidate for a school nurse/non-instructional endorsement must obtain a bachelor’s degree and complete 15 credit-hours in various school/nursing areas. In review of the school nurse certification eligibility criteria in some surrounding states, Pennsylvania, Maine, Massachusetts, and Delaware also require a bachelor’s degree; however, New York and New Hampshire do not.

The NJDOE issued a broadcast in December 2023 that is consistent with its advanced schooling requirement for the school nurse/non-instructional endorsement. In the broadcast, the NJDOE confirmed that school nursing is “a separate and distinct specialty” from RNs.¹ The NJDOE further explained that the credentials of a certified school nurse “signify a registered professional nurse (RN) with *advanced professional nursing knowledge and clinical skills specific to the school setting*”² (emphasis added).

With respect to the specific bachelor’s degree issue, the National Association of School Nurses’ (“NASN”) position is that “every school-age child should have access to a registered professional school nurse who has a *minimum* of a baccalaureate degree in nursing from an accredited college or university and is licensed as a registered nurse through a board of nursing. These requirements constitute minimal preparation needed to practice at the entry level of school nursing.”³ And, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the majority of RNs do have a baccalaureate degree. Specifically, as of 2022, 71.7% of the RN workforce earned a baccalaureate or higher degree as their highest level of nursing education⁴.

School Nurse Shortage

In its resolution, Franklin Township cited a federal report completed by the Health Resources and Services Administration in November 2024, which projected that New Jersey will have a shortage of almost 25,000 nurses by the year 2036⁵. This projection referred to RNs generally and was not specific to certified school nurses. However, because an RN license is one of the requirements to be a certified school nurse, the data is still relevant. As for data specific to school nurses, according to a 2021 survey conducted by NASN, approximately one-third of schools nationwide do not have access to a full-time nurse on site⁶.

An article reposted by the New Jersey School Nurses Association explores various factors related to the school nurse shortage⁷. One of the cited reasons is that school districts cannot compete with the salaries and benefits that hospitals offer, noting that the national median for school nurses is \$55,000/year, while a registered nurse can make nearly \$85,000/year at a hospital. The article also mentioned that the COVID-19 pandemic complicated school nurses’ roles, leading to an “extreme load of work” and “interact[ions] with parents who are angry.” It is also worth noting that the staffing shortage in school districts is not unique to school nurses. In November 2022, Governor Murphy issued Executive Order 309 to establish the Task Force on Public School Staff Shortages to develop recommendations to address teacher and educational support professionals in school districts across the state⁸.

¹ See

<https://www.nj.gov/education/broadcasts/2023/dec/13/DelegationofMedicationAdministrationinSchoolSettings.pdf>

² See *Id.*

³ See <https://www.nasn.org/nasn-resources/professional-practice-documents/position-statements/ps-education#:~:text=It%20is%20the%20position%20of,university%20and%20is%20licensed%20as>

⁴ See <https://www.aacnnursing.org/news-data/fact-sheets/nursing-workforce-fact-sheet#:~:text=Most%20registered%20nurses%20today%20enter,highest%20level%20of%20nursing%20education>

⁵ See <https://bhw.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/bureau-health-workforce/data-research/nursing-projections-factsheet.pdf>

⁶ See <https://njsna.org/a-third-of-schools-dont-have-a-nurse-heres-why-thats-a-problem/>

⁷ See *Id.*

⁸ See <https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-309.pdf>

Franklin Township has advised that their district, along with other local school districts, is having a hard time finding substitute nurses and/or filling vacancies for certified school nurses. Because of the limited pool and high demand for qualified candidates, the district explained that some agencies charge up to \$400/day for a certified school nurse, as compared to a teacher's average rate of \$115/day.

In 2013, in response to a school nurse shortage⁹, the NJDOE reduced the semester-hour requirements and prerequisite study areas for the school nurse/non-instructional endorsement “*to ease recruitment for school nurses while not posing a risk to student health.*” See 45 N.J.R. 152(a) (emphasis added). Specifically, the NJDOE decreased the semester-hour requirements from 21 to 15 and removed three subject areas from these requirements (human growth and development; substance abuse and dependency; and human and intercultural relations). However, the NJDOE added those subject areas to professional development requirements; therefore, although the classes were no longer prerequisites for the endorsement, the content was still required once employed by a school district. See *Id.*; See also N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-14.4. Following the NJDOE's amendments to the school nurse endorsement, the Legislature introduced and adopted A1256 in 2017 for consistency with NJDOE's regulations. See *N.J.S.A. 18A:40-3.8*.

NJSBA has also weighed-in on school nurses in the context of easing staffing restrictions for school districts. In supporting an interpretation of *N.J.S.A. 18A:40-3.3* that would permit school districts to provide certain services by a noncertified nurse (who would be under the general supervision of a certified school nurse, but not necessarily *directly* supervised by the certified school nurse while providing the services), NJSBA highlighted the health and safety of students, while also advocating for a district's flexibility. Specifically, in an amicus brief that NJSBA filed in connection with the *Ramsey Board of Education* case cited earlier, NJSBA argued that the “legislative intent of *N.J.S.A. 18A:40-3.3* establishes a public policy that recognizes that there are ways to provide for the health and safety of students while still working within today's fiscal constraints.” Again, as mentioned earlier, the New Jersey Appellate Division agreed with NJSBA and concluded that a certified school nurse is not required to be present at all times when a noncertified nurse is providing services. In reaching this decision, the court explained that *N.J.S.A. 18A:40-3.3* and the related statutes demonstrate the intent to strike “a balance between the competing goals of providing enhanced nursing services and allowing local school districts flexibility in their personnel and budgetary decisions.” See, 382 *N.J. Super.* 241 at 250.

RELEVANT NJSBA POLICY

The proposed resolution seeks to add position and policy that is not currently contained within *NJSBA's Positions and Policies (P&P) on Education*. Although Franklin Township did not initially cite a specific P&P file code where it would seek to add the proposed resolution language, in a follow-up conversation, the district proposed adding the language to File Code

⁹ In support of its amendments decreasing the endorsement requirements for school nurses, the NJDOE noted that there was an increase in the number of requests for emergency certificates for the school nurse/non-instructional endorsement and interpreted this data as indicative of a school nurse shortage. See, 45 N.J.R. 152(a).

4112.2, “Certification,” as a new section. There are also several relevant P&P file codes which relate generally to the substantive content of the proposed resolution. For example:

1. NJSBA P&P, File Code 4111 indicates the belief that continuous efforts to improve and increase the supply of qualified candidates for school employment are beneficial as long as those efforts do not compromise the quality of the applicant pool and do not result in state mandated intrusions into the authority of local boards of education, including but not limited to their right to: determine their local budgets and deliver an instructional program that best meets the needs of their students and their local communities.
2. NJSBA P&P, File Code 4111 also indicates the belief that incentives, such as grants and loans, should be made available to attract outstanding students to the teaching profession, particularly in those areas of critical shortage. Loans to students who agree to teach a certain number of years in areas of critical shortage should be forgiven.
3. NJSBA P&P, File Code 4141 indicates the belief that, in order to provide quality health services to public school children in a cost efficient manner, local school districts should be authorized to hire licensed practical nurses to augment, assist or substitute for its certified nurses, at a pay scale comparable to teacher aides, but not defining them as teaching staff.

DISCUSSION

Through current P&P policies, NJSBA recognizes the flexibility that school districts need in staffing for health services, while also ensuring the quality of the health services.

Additionally, the NJDOE, through a rule-making that decreased the requirements for the school nurse endorsement to address a school nurse shortage, explained that any changes to the eligibility criteria must balance the health and safety of students. The decreased requirements were also minimal – 21 to 15 semester credit-hours and the removal of three classes that became professional development requirements. In a broadcast (December 2023), the NJDOE has also emphasized that, in comparison to an RN, a certified school nurse has “advanced professional nursing knowledge and clinical skills specific to the school setting.” This broadcast demonstrated that NJDOE values the advanced schooling that is currently in place for the school nurse/non-instructional endorsement. The NASN also maintains that all school nurses should have a bachelor’s degree.

Franklin Township’s proposed resolution is to modify the school nurse endorsement requirements to an RN license (which only requires an associate’s degree), plus three additional classes in school operations to be completed within eighteen months of employment by a school district. This solution assumes that the underlying cause of the school nurse shortage in New Jersey is the requirement of a bachelor’s degree; however, there is data demonstrating that most RNs have a bachelor’s degree.

Further, as NJDOE contains the school licensing entity in the state (the State Board of Examiners) and has addressed nursing shortages before by slightly decreasing the pre-requisite classes (in amount and content), NJDOE may determine that there are alternative modifications to the school nurse/non-instructional endorsement and/or other solutions to this issue that are more appropriate.

STATEMENT OF REASONS

1. In order to provide quality health services, local school districts should have flexibility in staffing, while also ensuring the health and safety of their students.
2. However, without additional research and feedback from the NJDOE regarding whether or not the benefits of a bachelor's degree are essential to providing quality health services and ensuring the health and safety of students, the endorsement criteria in Franklin Township's proposed resolution may be overly narrow.
3. Accordingly, the suggested modified resolution language below captures the spirit of Franklin Township's resolution, while also broadening the circumstances under which steps may be taken to address the school nurse shortage.

RECOMMENDATION

The Resolutions Subcommittee recommends approval of the proposed resolution with the following substitute language that would create additional policy language to be included in NJSBA's *Manual of Positions and Policies* in File Code 4111:

The NJSBA believes that all necessary and appropriate steps should be pursued to address the school nurse shortage and to increase the number of candidates who are eligible for the school nurse/non-instructional endorsement from the NJDOE.

NEW JERSEY SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION

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**ANNUAL DELEGATE ASSEMBLY
May 10, 2025**

**The following resolution was received from the
Franklin Township Board of Education (Warren):**

- WHEREAS, Public school districts in the State of New Jersey are required to employ or contract for the services of a certified school nurse; and
- WHEREAS, It is anticipated that New Jersey will have a shortage of almost 25,000 nurses by the year 2036, according to a federal report by the Health Resources and Services Administration/U.S. DHHS; and
- WHEREAS, An RN certification may be obtained with only an Associates Degree, which typically requires 60-75 credit hours of study, as compared to a School Nurse Certification, which requires a Bachelor's Degree, inclusive of specific courses related to the school environment; and
- WHEREAS, The time and cost related to the additional courses necessary to move from the RN certification to the School Nurse certification seldom results in a salary elevation that would make a public employee's compensation in a school district more lucrative than one in the private sector health industry; and
- WHEREAS, School districts in the State of New Jersey are already experiencing difficulties in finding qualified candidates to fill vacant Certified School Nurse positions; and
- WHEREAS, The Delegate Assembly is the official policymaking body of the New Jersey School Boards Association; and
- WHEREAS, Education-related policies resulting from prior Delegate Assembly and Board of Directors actions are codified in the NJSBA's Manual of Positions and Policies on Education; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Franklin Township Board of Education proposes the following additional policy language for adoption by the Delegate Assembly and inclusion in NJSBA's Manual of Positions and Policies on Education:

The NJSBA believes that the State of New Jersey should modify the existing requirements for a School Nurse certification to consist of the following:

1. An RN certification
2. Three additional classes in school specific operations, as determined appropriate by the State of New Jersey, to be completed within the first 18 months following the commencement of employment at a public school. Prior to completion of said courses, the candidate would be able to operate under a provisional certification, provided that their RN certification remains current.
3. That all current guidelines for continuing education remain the same as they currently exist, and, be it further

RESOLVED, That this resolution be placed on the agenda for consideration at the May 10, 2025 Delegate Assembly.

Adopted at a regular meeting of the
Franklin Township Board of Education
on February 19, 2025

Timothy Duryea
Board Secretary